SPARTON TECHNOLOGY SITE UPDATE

An Update on EPA's Activities at the Sparton Technology Coors Road Facility Albuquerque, New Mexico

April 21, 1999

THIS SITE UPDATE WILL TELL YOU ABOUT:

- EPA's remedy selection at the site.
- EPA's activities since remedy selection.
- The current status of the site.
- Future activities at the site.
- The site background.
- Where to obtain more information about the site.

EPA'S REMEDY SELECTION

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) selected a remedy on June 24, 1996, to address the source area and ground water contaminant plume originating from the Sparton Technology, Inc. (Sparton) facility located at 9621 Coors Road NW. EPA's selected remedy combines the implementation of a ground water containment and restoration system designed to address the entire contaminant plume along with a soil vapor extraction system to enhance further reduction of the remaining source material beneath the facility. The ground water contaminant plume contains waste solvents, such as trichloroethylene and trichloroethane, and extends at least ½ mile northwest of the facility.

SITE ACTIVITIES SINCE REMEDY SELECTION

On July 2, 1996, EPA sent a proposed Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) § 3008(h) Administrative Order on Consent (the proposed Consent Order) to Sparton. If agreed to, the proposed Consent Order would have required Sparton to implement EPA's selected remedy. Negotiations between EPA and Sparton regarding the proposed Consent Order were terminated on August 7, 1996, when Sparton filed a lawsuit related to the site in U.S. District Court against EPA. Since EPA and Sparton were unable to reach agreement on the proposed Consent Order, EPA issued a RCRA § 3008(h) Initial Administrative Order (Unilateral Order) on September 16, 1996. The Unilateral Order required Sparton to implement the remedy selected by EPA. In accordance with EPA regulations, Sparton requested and was granted an administrative hearing concerning the Unilateral Order. The administrative hearing was held at the EPA Region 6 offices in Dallas, Texas, on March 27, 1997.

On February 19, 1997, shortly before the hearing on the September 1996 Unilateral Order, EPA, together with the City of Albuquerque, the Bernalillo County Commissioners, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), the New Mexico Attorney General's Office, and the New Mexico Office of the Natural Resources Trustee, commenced a civil action in U.S. District Court in Albuquerque to compel Sparton to take action on the contamination emanating from the Sparton facility. In April 1997, shortly after the civil action was filed, EPA and

the other governmental parties filed a Motion for Preliminary Injunction. In the Motion, EPA and the other governmental parties asked the court to order Sparton to conduct tests which the government agencies argued were needed to design and build a system to prevent further expansion of the ground water contaminant plume. The requested actions included additional investigation of the extent of the off-site contaminant plume and the performance of an aquifer pump test to obtain information necessary to design a system to prevent further spread of contaminants in the ground water.

On August 7, 1997, the U.S. District Court ordered Sparton, EPA, and the other governmental parties to enter into settlement negotiations regarding the Motion for Preliminary Injunction. Negotiations between Sparton, EPA, and the other governmental parties continued through December 1997, and while progress was made, no final resolution was reached. In March 1998, a two day court hearing on the Motion for Preliminary Injunction was held. At the conclusion of the hearing, the court stated that it was inclined to issue a preliminary injunction but had not yet decided upon the specific terms of the order. At the request of the court, the parties renewed settlement negotiations and a settlement was reached. On July 7, 1998, the federal court entered an Agreed Order under which Sparton was to perform investigative work at the site and to gather data about the aquifer which could be used to design and construct a system to prevent further spread of the contamination.

Specifically, the work performed by Sparton pursuant to the July 7, 1998, Agreed Order, included (1) installation of a new monitoring well to assess the vertical extent of contamination near the middle of the contaminant plume; (2) conducting a pump test to determine the characteristics of the aquifer at the leading edge of the contaminant plume so that a system to prevent further spread of the contamination could be designed; and (3) preparation of a report describing the results of this work. Sparton completed the work required by the July 1998 Agreed Order in February 1999. Sparton's conclusion from this work was that it will be possible to prevent further spread of the contaminant plume by operating the extraction well utilized during the pump test at a rate of approximately 225 gallons per minute. The extraction well is currently in operation, and it is intended that contaminated ground water will be drawn into the well, thus preventing the further spread of the contamination. Sparton obtained a permit from NMED on June 26, 1998, which allows the extracted ground water, after treatment to remove contaminants, to be returned to the aquifer through an infiltration gallery located underneath the nearby Calabacillas Arroyo. Returning the treated water to the aquifer will prevent loss of valuable water resources. The performance of this system will need to be evaluated to determine whether the system is preventing the further spread of the contamination as predicted and whether any changes to the system are required. Finally, Sparton prepared a technical report containing the data generated during its work. This report and other site information is available at the Taylor Ranch Branch Library, EPA, or NMED.

In addition to the work performed by Sparton under the July 7, 1998, Agreed Order, Sparton has also taken some measures to address on-site contamination. First, Sparton is taking steps to remove solvent vapors in the soil above the ground water through implementation of a soil vapor extraction system. While work remains to be done to address solvent vapors in the soil, Sparton has performed actions that have reduced contaminants found in the on-site soil. In addition, Sparton has installed additional monitoring wells on-site which are intended to provide data to be used in the design of a system to limit off-site movement of on-site contamination.

In mid-1997, Sparton's administrative appeal of EPA's September 1996 Unilateral Order moved toward completion. In July 1997, the EPA Regional Judicial Officer recommended to the EPA Regional Administrator that the Unilateral Order, with slight revisions, be affirmed. The EPA Region 6 Regional Administrator issued a Final Administrative Order to Sparton on February 10, 1998 (the Final Order). The Final Order requires Sparton to implement the remedy selected for the Sparton site by EPA on June 24, 1996.

CURRENT STATUS OF SITE ACTIVITIES

EPA and the other governmental parties to the lawsuit continue to seek a remedy which is at least the equivalent of the remedy initially selected in June 1996. The major components of this remedy include: (1) continued operation of an on-site ground water extraction and treatment system, (2) further characterization of the extent of contamination in the ground water and unsaturated zone, (3) installation and operation of additional ground water extraction well(s), and (4) installation and operation of an on-site soil vapor extraction system. EPA has determined that these activities will meet the corrective action objectives for the site which are: (1) prevent further migration of the contaminant plume, (2) reduce the quantity of chemical sources in the soil and ground water, to the extent practicable, to minimize further release of contaminants to the surrounding ground water, and ensure that no additional ground water is contaminated above cleanup goals, and (3) restore the contaminated aquifer to the more stringent of Federal or State standards, or alternate cleanup standards if the initial standards are determined to be technically impracticable or infeasible and Sparton obtains required authorizations from EPA and NMED or the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission. EPA, the City of Albuquerque, the Bernalillo County Commissioners, the New Mexico Environment Department, the New Mexico Attorney General's Office, and the New Mexico Office of the Natural Resources Trustee are currently involved with settlement negotiations with Sparton.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

EPA desires to conclude negotiations concerning a comprehensive remedy as soon as possible. If the negotiations are successful, then the public will be notified and the settlement will not become final until (1) the public has had an opportunity to comment upon the settlement and (2) any comments made by the public have been considered. It is possible that implementation of the remedy may not begin until after a settlement is finalized. In the meantime, Sparton may be conducting field work at the facility and in the surrounding neighborhoods while these negotiations continue. The contacts for EPA and NMED concerning the activities at the Sparton site are Mr. Michael Hebert and Mr. Baird Swanson, respectively (please see the back page of this fact sheet for the phone numbers and addresses).

Information related to the Sparton site is available at the following locations:

Taylor Ranch Branch Library
5700 Bogart St., NW
Albuquerque, New Mexico
(505) 897-8816
Tue. & Wed., 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thur., Fri., and Sat., 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

New Mexico Environment Department
Ground Water Quality Bureau
4131 Montgomery
Albuquerque, NM 87109
505/841-9458

U.S. EPA Region 6
1445 Ross Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75202-2733
(214) 665-8315

SITE BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The Sparton facility consists of a 64,000-square-foot building on a 12-acre parcel of land on the northwest side of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Manufacturing of commercial, industrial, and military electronic components, including printed circuit boards, began in 1961. As of 1994, Sparton discontinued manufacturing operations at the Coors Road facility. Other than routine maintenance and machine shop operations, this facility is currently inactive.

Analyses of ground water samples collected from the monitoring wells around the facility have detected both organic and inorganic contaminants. Trichloroethylene (TCE) is the major ground water contaminant and has been used to define the extent of the contaminant plume. The contaminant plume has migrated at least ½ mile northwest of the facility.

Regional ground water supplies both drinking water for the City of Albuquerque as well as process water for industrial purposes. New Mexico Utilities, Inc., operates the nearest downgradient municipal water supply well (Well No. 2) to the Sparton site. This well is approximately 2.6 miles northwest of the facility and less than 2 miles northwest of the leading edge of the contaminant plume. There have been no identified private water supply wells immediately downgradient from the facility. Currently, no drinking water wells are impacted by the contaminant plume.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the facility, or if you have questions about site activities at the Sparton Technology facility, please contact:

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All media inquiries should be directed to the EPA Region 6 Office of External Affairs at (214) 665-2200